

Michigan Department of Human Services workers: Hurricane Katrina, a reminder of the work done in Michigan communities every day

**By Marianne Udow, Director
Michigan Department of Human Services
Lansing, Michigan**

I want to share the story of the lives of our Calhoun County DHS staff in the days following the hurricane. On Sept. 2, Calhoun County director Gwain McCree contacted his staff to tell them that the Fort Custer Training Center in Calhoun County would be temporary home for an unknown number of hurricane evacuees. The first planes arrived on Labor Day.

Soon, 21 Calhoun County DHS employees arrived. They interviewed evacuees, helped them register with FEMA, and located housing for those staying in Michigan. DHS employees made sympathetic connections with victims, many of whom lost everything to the storm. One worker accompanied a woman to a doctor's appointment...as her friend. Others took on the role of counselor, listening quietly to stories of unspeakable grief and loss.

This is the kind of work DHS staff do every day to help people in our communities who are most in need. One positive outcome of the Gulf Coast hurricanes has been an increasing dialogue about poverty in America. I hope another positive outcome is to help our Michigan communities see more clearly the jewel that exists in every county in Michigan, our committed and caring Department of Human Services staff.

For more information on what the Department of Humans Services, go to <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs> and click on "Hurricane Katrina Relief".